

To Alice | Part One

How I've pressed against the shower wall for you.

I suppose I've been withholding; you can know more about me. I've just never known how interested you are. Sometimes I wonder if you would really follow through with your practice if a nice enough life presented itself. I guess I'm challenging you, to see what you're going to do. In my fantasies we organize orgies, tour strip clubs across the US, hold erotic lectures on Chaturbate.

So who the fuck am I? I've been looking at myself with new eyes recently, because I've recently become quite content with my life. It's not standing still by any means, but the whole vibe of it is very pleasing. I've been discussing the salient features.

So my mother is German and my father is American. They met in Scotland as hippies, hitchhiking. Thinking on it now I must have some facile romanticism bred into me from that encounter. They kept in touch by letter when they returned to their respective countries, and several years later my father moved to Germany to be with my mother and learned German. They lived there several years and my sibling Eva was born there in 1987. I was born outside Hamburg on August 22, 1991. Shortly thereafter, my parents moved back to Atlanta because my father's mother (Gran) was there and she helped them with money and childcare.

My parents fought a lot. My father was very sensitive to criticism and they were both pretty isolated, my mom especially because she was an immigrant and her English wasn't the strongest. Now that I think of it, I have a pretty strong immigrant streak in me. It's easy for me to mentally downplay because we're all white, maybe? But there's this whole other country I'm a citizen of, Germany. That looms large because I have family history in WWII. My grandmother's (Oma Lo) mother was killed along with two of my great uncles in an Allied bombing of Pirmasens, their hometown. My grandfather (Opa Ritchie) also was essentially drafted into the German military in 1944 when he was 17 and went to fight/commit genocide in Hungary.

My father's father was a military man. He saw WWII coming and trained to be a pilot. Then he flew over the Himalayas to supply the Republic of China. My grandmother's father died when she was 8 and her mother was pregnant. I recently learned there was a mystery as to whether my great-grandmother told my great-grandfather her condition before he passed. I'm not sure how he died at this moment. Father's mother's brother, "Alligator" Al, had a son who committed suicide in 1974. It was barely ever discussed.

My father was born in 1952 and turned 18 in 1970. He was in the draft lottery for Vietnam and was not drafted. His father told him it was a matter of family honor for him to volunteer to go fight in the Vietnam War, which my grandfather considered of the same importance as WWII. My father refused, and wound up not speaking to his father for several years.

My mother told me once I was such a happy, outgoing child, "and then something happened." Dysfunction. I got into two fights at school when I was 4 and then 5, with the same person, Andrew Mock. I lost both times. He later committed suicide, I heard because he was gay and his father didn't accept him.

I never had many friends, except because we went to an international school (the essay I wrote which got me into Society of the Spectacle was my IB Extended Essay. Mr. Rogers thought I would get a C

but I got an A) there would be German students whose parents came to Atlanta to work for Siemens or Lufthansa or whatnot. I would be their buddy and be friends with them but then they would leave. There was a guy Marius who left the school and skipped a grade. I always wished I could have done the same thing. But I was already socially behind.

Flash to senior year, I found out Hannah Schiller was leaving the school to go to Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan for senior year after going there over the summer. We had told each other we liked each other, then her friend found out Hannah was “walking on eggshells around her” because they shared a Facebook password and Hannah had written that to me. I’ve gone back and seen there were many times I had written correspondence with a woman.

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade I was an exchange student to Dresden. My exchange student’s name was Florentin and his best friend was named Thurid. She was the most beautiful person I had ever known personally. Such a smile. She was in love with Florentin and he would lead her on, I think they fucked, but then he would always leave her. It made me want to shake him by the shoulders. The men some women are wasted on. I wrote emails with Thurid for a year or so after I got back. I remember maybe I was telling her about Hannah, or wanting a girlfriend, and she said she wasn’t sure I was ready for that. I knew it might be true, but it made it hurt all the worse.

So after Hannah left I was doing really bad. I had long hair and but it all off. Someone at school said I looked like I had been in a concentration camp. I was also prodigiously losing weight, I reached my lowest weight since adolescence then and in my first year at Oberlin. I passed a note to the counselor saying I was doing really badly. I was sent to a psychologist who told me that I, as a senior, was asking questions he normally heard from 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and that I had the bone structure of a model. I got a 2370 on my SATs. I was cool for five seconds and got to go to one cool party. I threw up all over Fernanda’s basement.

After reading *Society of the Spectacle*, I found some Baudrillard my parents had and it was well and truly over for me. I was ruined, for a long time, for polite society. I was horribly depressed at school. My first semester I got an A, a B+, and two Bs I think. My father said, “how about raising those Bs to As?” That was by far my best semester at the school. I did psychedelics and watched conspiracy theory videos, read philosophy but mainly Baudrillard. Learned my “radical history” as part of the resident radical posers. The co-op I lived in, Harkness, was pretty fucking wild though.

I lost my virginity at 17 the summer before college to a woman named Cara who was going to Bard along with my friend from school, Grayson. His birthday is on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and we threw a party for him. He was in the Posse program at Bard and so Cara was in his Posse and she came. I was wearing my Quentin Tarantino’s *Grindhouse* T-shirt I got after writing a letter to this movie column in the paper asking where to watch classic (read: old) movies in theaters. Eva’s friend mocked me for the (read: old) bit.

Cara left the party and then came back, saying she felt sick. Looking back, this is a pretty flimsy excuse. We found each other at the bottom of the basement stairs, and it was happening. She asked me if I’d ever been down on a woman before. I thought it was because I was soooo good, but instead I bit her clit she told me later. Cara is 6 feet tall, volleyball player, white/black/indigenous mixed race. She studied playwriting at Bard, I’ve recently reached out again to see what’s up but I forget if I found out.

So we didn’t do it then, but I drove up to Canton to get her and brought her back to my folk’s house and we had a good time. I don’t think I’ll ever forget the first time I got oral. It’s funny how it makes you

remember to breathe. And then your whole skin is this effervescent problem. We fucked in the car by a baseball field and these people came to practice soccer. I'm not sure how much they saw, given how foggy the windows were.

Also that summer I had sex with a woman named Carla that I met by working at the World Peace Cafe. I invited her to my senior piano recital and she showed up to the recital at my teacher's stately house in this low low cut dress. Carla was black, Jehovah's witness. We went to the movies, we saw Angels and Demons I think? But we started making out and wound up back in my mom's minivan, where I fingered her. She remarked that most other guys nails hurt her, but not mine. Finally my years of nail-biting paid off. My teeth are a bit worn down, though.

Carla rented us a motel room for a special night. We took a shower together. I couldn't stop masturbating the night before. She had toys. She was interested to know whether a vegan's (as I was at the time because Hannah was, I think) cum would taste better. I forget the answer.

At college I had two girls going first semester, Frances and Sal. Sal and I kissed under the Christmas tree in Latin American House, and I felt this enormous pressure to go with her. So I did, but I always kind of wanted out. Still, it was my longest relationship to date, having lasted almost a year. Sal painted my dick one time, and one time she fell on it and I strained a tendon on my dick. That took a long time to heal. One time we were fucking in the room while her roommate was asleep. I was worried about the noise and said, "I'm thinking about Maayan." She thought I meant I was thinking about her while fucking as a fantasy. After about five minutes of eternity we realized and laughed about it. But then one time I wrote this piece of writing which mentioned how it felt good to be someone Sal could trust, I mentioned her riding me I think. Something about, I forget exactly, upset Sal greatly and we had a long talk on stone steps by a little stream. Long before that we fucked in the reeds next to the Environmental Studies building in full view of the sidewalk. I got stung by a bee.